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**J**ust as the "useful idiots" (Lenin's phrase) in our national media have fallen head-over-heels in love with the Kremlin's top thug, Mikhail Gorbachev, many of these same folks also seem to have the hots for Eduard Amvrosievich Shevardnadze, the Soviet's new foreign minister, who will meet today with President Reagan.

*Time* magazine sees Mr. S. as a man whose tone is "quiet and moderate," a man who made his mark with "incorruptibility and a flair for public relations."

*The New York Times* sees him as "a popular figure in Georgia" (?) who has "elegant manners" and is expected to bring "a touch of style and ethnic diversity to Soviet foreign affairs." *The Times* says other foreign ministers have found him to have shown "the affability and charm that are believed to have been considered one of the qualifications of his job."

And *Times* foreign affairs columnist Flora Lewis is smitten by Mr. S's "rosy round face" and his "willingness to smile and banter."

*The Washington Post* sees Mr. S. as "unpretentious" (his wife "used to take the bus to work") and a person who appears to help "introduce a new note of personal amiability to superpower relations." *The Post* quotes a Western diplomat as saying about him: "He is not sour, he has a jovial face, and he would seem not averse to enjoying life." And *The Post* quotes Jerry Hough, a so-called Soviet specialist at the Brookings Institution, as saying that Mr. S's speeches show "a nice, light style" with "a touch of humor."

Well, now. As you may have antici-

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# The other side of Mr. Shevardnadze



Eduard Shevardnadze

pated, there is another side to Mr. S.:

- A Radio Liberty research report this past July, citing *samizdat* documents reaching the West in 1975, says that Mr. S. — when he was minister of internal affairs in the Republic of Georgia — "personally authorized" the torture of people detained in Georgian prisons. This charge was made in connection with a specific feature of Soviet prisons, the "pressure cells," or cells where specially selected prisoners beat up

and torture other prisoners on the instructions of MVD and KGB investigators, the object being to extort depositions advantageous to the prosecution.

In one of these documents, one of these "pressure cells" in Georgia — under the control of Mr. S. — is described as "a slaughterhouse" and "a place for the MVD hangmen's orgies" where "the most horrible tortures were used: beating with iron bars, prodding with steel needles and rods, hanging up by the feet, burning parts of the body with lighted cigarettes, holding under a hot shower, homosexual rape, and so on."

Ah yes, the charm and affability of Mr. S.

- A popular figure in Georgia? Not exactly. In his new book *Klass: How Russians Really Live*, (St. Martin's Press), former *Christian Science Monitor* Moscow bureau chief David Willis tells of a time in 1978 in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, when thousands of people crowded the street to protest a new draft constitution for Georgia which left out a clause affirming the status of Georgian as an official republic language. When Mr. S. appeared on a balcony and addressed the protesters as "my children," the crowd shouted back: "We are not your children!"

- Eric Blitz, the Soviet case coordinator for Amnesty International's